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Past Presidents Keep Active Lives

Linfield Magazine Staff

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Kemper, he broadened those experiences by working with some of the nation’s top undergraduate business schools and alongside senior corporate officers of Kemper Insurance. As executive director of the foundation, Hellie also frequently met with fundraisers and gained a strong understanding of what is effective and not effective in seeking funding for projects.

“I’ve had opportunities to interact with corporate and business leaders whom I would not have met in my academic role,” he added. “It’s given me a better appreciation, respect and understanding of the business sector. I hope that experience will make me more effective in representing Linfield to the outside world.”

But his favorite part of the job was administering the Kemper Scholars Program for 80 undergraduates at 19 participating colleges. He served as a mentor to some of the scholars, a teaching opportunity he had missed since leaving Hiram.

Matt Huels, one of the students he mentored, has remained close to Hellie since completing the program. He said Hellie took an active interest in his development, both personally and professionally.

“He is a powerful listener and a compassionate person,” Huels said. “He is a man of faith who works very hard at what he does. He will take an interest in the people he works with, and will take a particular interest in the students.”

Huels and others who know Hellie well agree that his greatest asset is his ability to ask probing questions and listen to what people have to say.

“At Kemper, he was a leader who learned what people were doing and what they had to contribute,” Huels said. “Then he was able to add his own flair and a compassionate person,” Huels said. “He is a man of faith who works very hard at what he does. He will take an interest in the people he works with, and will take a particular interest in the students.”

Although traditionally college presidents began their term in the summer, Hellie opted to come in April to have a chance to meet this year’s graduating seniors and to engage with the faculty prior to commencement. His initial goal is to get to know the institution as well as he possibly can, including students, staff, faculty, trustees and alumni.

“To understand the institution, I need to do a lot of listening, and that’s going to be important during my first few months,” he said. “I need to hear from as many people as I can. Once I do that, I will be better prepared to enunciate goals and work with others to devise a plan to meet those goals.

“The last two presidents and everyone else at the college have dramatically strengthened the college and elevated its profile,” Hellie said. “This is a great opportunity for any new college president. I just happen to be the lucky one.”

— Madi Milsam

Dr. Hellie is eager to hear from alumni and others about their Linfield experiences and their views about the college today. He can be contacted at newprez@linfield.edu. If he receives an overwhelming response, he may be unable to personally respond to all messages.

Vivian A. Bull 1992-2005

The few months since her retirement as Linfield College president have been anything but restful for Vivian Bull.

With her trademark energy, she continues flying coast-to-coast, consulting, mentoring and serving the greater community.

Bull is working with regional accreditation commissions and continues her affiliation with Africa University in Zimbabwe. She is an active member of the Board of Higher Education of the United Methodist Church, chairing the investment committee, serving on the University Senate and chairing an international peer evaluation committee. She has been nominated to chair the board for the WF Albright Institute of Archaeology in Jerusalem, where she chairs the investment committee. She is also mentoring some new presidents and a newly structured board of trustees.

Bull and husband, Robert, former director of the Drew Institute for Archaeological Research, are finishing up a number of archaeological projects and plan to return to Jerusalem to continue their work on publications.

Gordon C. Bjork 1968-1974

Gordon Bjork, Linfield’s 16th president, accepted the position at age 32, moving his young family into the president’s home in 1968.

After leaving Linfield in 1974, Bjork went on to a distinguished academic career at Claremont McKenna College in California, where he was the first Jonathan B. Lovelace Professor of Economics and taught until his retirement in 2003. In addition to teaching, Bjork created BankSim, a commercial banking course for which he was twice honored by the Freedoms Foundation.

Bjork was appointed to the Environmental Protection Agency’s National Advisory Council on Environmental Policy and Technology, which he was twice honored by the Freedoms Foundation. Bjork was also honored by the Environmental Protection Agency’s National Advisory Council on Environmental Policy and Technology. He is the author of four books on economics and has contributed to 10 others.

He and his wife, Susan, live in Santa Barbara, Calif., near their four children and eight grandchildren.

Cornelius H. Siemens served as interim president from 1974 to 1975. He died in 1978.

Charles U. Walker 1975-1992

Charles Walker has maintained an extraordinary commitment to community service since retiring. During his 17 years as Linfield’s leader, he built a reputation for community involvement, and his retirement has proven no different. He has been prominently involved in the Ford Family Foundation, serving as vice chair of the board and helping to design the foundation’s two major initiatives: the Ford Scholars Program and the Ford Institute for Community Building. He is now a special advisor to the board.

Walker is chair of the Oregon Cultural Trust, which makes grants to cultural organizations in addition to raising funds toward a $200 million permanent endowment.

His interest in education led to Walker’s involvement in the Chalkboard Project, designed to help strengthen K-12 education in Oregon. The project is run by Foundations for a Better Oregon, which he chairs, and is made up of the Ford Family Foundation, the Meyer Memorial Trust, the Collins Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation and the Jeld-Wen Foundation.

Walker, a classical music enthusiast, also started Neskonlith Chamber Music in 1994 and combines his interest in international education and travel to lead tours around the world. He is president of his local library board, serves as a board member of the Tillamook County Futures Council and works as an evaluator for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Winthrop W. Dolan 1968 and 1974

Win Dolan, professor emeritus of mathematics, took the reins of Linfield on two separate occasions, serving as interim president in 1968 and 1974.

Following his retirement from Linfield in 1974, he continued teaching part-time for 10 years. He served on the Linfield Board of Trustees until 1989 and since then as a trustee emeritus. He served on the housing authority, the school board budget committee and a county land-use committee. He appeared in more than 20 plays and musicals at McMinnville’s Gallery Theatre. He also founded Penelope Pantry, a senior lunch program backed by local churches, which operated prior to the opening of the McMinnville Senior Center. Throughout the years, Dolan has remained an active member of the First Baptist Church, singing in the choir for more than 50 years.